

MAR 11 1936

DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY
AT HOME & ABROAD



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DRAMA

VOL 14

JANUARY MCMXXXVI

NUMBER 4

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

By E. A. Baughan

OWING to the success of theatrical productions since the end of November and the beginning of December there is but little material for our usual monthly article. I have been tempted, indeed, to fall back on a review of the year, but that is a deadly article to write and still more deadly to read.

Taking up the last account of a month's plays, I find that my predecessor had not sufficient space to deal with the performance of "The Three Sisters" and "Macbeth" at the Old Vic. Tchekov is not easy to play without making the author too heavy and humourless. On the whole the Old Vic players did very well, and at least two parts had the right atmosphere—the elder of the three sisters, beautifully acted by Miss Marie Ney, and the drunken old doctor. "Macbeth" suffered from bad casting, a weakness which is always noticeable in a repertory company.

Unfortunately I was not able to see "Mary Tudor," and from the published criticism it has not been possible to come to any definite conclusion as to the merits of the play, but it has been made clear that the author has tried to whitewash the sanguinary figure of history, and that Miss Flora Robson made a new character of Elizabeth's elder sister.

Apart from this play there has been little of moment. "The Farm of Three Echoes," a Sunday production, by the author of "White Cargo," was a grim drama of life on an African farm, as lived by an Africander family. The play has strength and atmosphere. "These Mortals," a Repertory Players' production by H. M. Harwood and another, was one of those plays with an enormous cast which would be

impossible to present on a commercial stage. It very wittily draws a modern parallel between the Zeus-ridden and the modern Christian world, with a last act in which Mussolini, Hitler, Queen Victoria, Julius Caesar, and other famous and infamous personages appear in Purgatory. Zeus, who has become a Christian god has to choose one man and one woman for promotion to Heaven. His choice falls on Uncle Tom who had borne unhappiness without a grumble, and on Helen of Troy who at any rate would shed beauty on the inmates of Heaven.

The last act is really a separate play and has sufficient material for a long discussion play in the manner of Bernard Shaw.

"A Royal Exchange" at His Majesty's proved one of the "flops" of the year, and I need only say that it would never have been produced if the two film-stars who were its principal characters, had been well-advised by their friends. In the theatrical world there are too many yes-men and women. No one dares to tell actors and actresses the truth. No critic worth his salt would have advised the production of "A Royal Exchange."

"Fritzi" at the Adelphi will probably prove a success owing to its pretty music, and the revival of the forty-year-old "La Poupee" at His Majesty's may triumph over its old-fashioned libretto. Audran's music has still a charm of its own. This is a poor list of the plays of a month in the London Theatre, but, as I said at the beginning of this survey, there have been very few new plays owing to the success of the theatre as a whole.

FINGER POSTS FOR AMATEURS

By G. E. Middleditch

THE almost phenomenal growth of the amateur movement since the war gives all of us who are interested in this aspect of dramatic art, cause for great satisfaction, but ought we not to halt now and again to see whether legitimate pride is not growing into complacency, and to enquire in what direction this vast accumulation of artistic energy is heading? Here and there we come across amateur performances which are excellent in every respect; occasionally the amateur movement is responsible for the discovery of fine actors and good plays; but after sixteen years of intimate association with amateurs of all sorts and conditions, I am now rather bitterly forced to admit that the movement has not yet justified its existence and that its growth in size is not matched by improvements in performance. I know that in certain branches of technique the amateur is immeasurably the superior of his type in 1919, but to be an expert in electrical wiring, to know all there is to be known about period costumes, to be able to paint scenery—these are not proofs of acting ability. If I saw only a few outstanding feats of acting each year in the Drama League Festivals, I should be well content with slower progress in the management and organisation of performance. If amateurs concentrated as much upon good acting as they do upon stage effects, I think that we should soon have a much more representative audience for amateur productions. For is it not perfectly true that out of all the millions of people who are willing to pay for entertainment, those who buy tickets for amateur performances form an almost unnoticeable minority?

Mere criticism, however, is so easy that I hesitate to voice it. The amateur has at least become a somewhat important factor in dramatic art and deserves that his activities should be given a direction. I am not willing to prophesy what will be the future of the movement. For all I know, it may have none. But most of us desire its advancement and I want to take the liberty here of suggesting what I believe are the vital functions of amateur enterprise or, if you like, finger posts telling the amateur in which direction he is likely to justify his existence.

Obviously, the main intention of the amateur is to enjoy himself by rehearsing and acting plays. Genuine interest in art and personal vanity are his motives; we need not bother to ask which is predominant, but we must realise that from first to last acting is a hobby with him and never touches his livelihood. Charities make money out of his imperfect performances, publishers and authors of successful plays encourage him to pay them fees; the Exchequer describes his efforts as entertainment, not to compliment him but in order to extract a duty. Yet the circumstances surrounding his performances are still of such a character that he seldom runs any serious financial risk and is in a position to consider his own preferences before those of his audience.

Meanwhile, the purchasing power of the public, and especially that part of it which is earmarked for entertainment, becomes sligher than ever; unemployment in the professional theatre is desperately widespread; and the general public only patronises the "living theatre" upon special occasions of celebration. Indeed, it has become the custom to think of the cinema as the normal place for entertainment, and the theatre as part of a "jolly evening." These things may be unalterable, they may be desirable, but some of us still hold that the "living theatre" can and ought to be revived and that the amateur is under an obligation to support the revival. We require more from him than an interest in drama; we ask him to change his attitude towards it. We think that the amateur without relinquishing his enjoyment in acting as a hobby, can well afford to bear in mind the thousands of out-of-work professional actors and the still unsolved problem of bringing about a revival of the "living theatre."

1. *The Amateur's obligation to the Unemployed.*

I have already referred to some of those who profit financially from amateur performances—the charities, authors, publishers, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Of course there are others—printers, electric supply companies, makers of costumes, scenery and furniture amongst them. All of these bene-

FINGER POSTS FOR AMATEURS

ficiaries, except the State, are business organisations. Most of them are scrupulous enough to subscribe to the general rule of business that it is unethical to cut prices by the employment of unpaid labour. But in their relations with amateurs they do not notice that they are doing something very similar to this when they make profits out of an enterprise which can only exist while its participants are unpaid. And the amateur himself does not realise that in taking some of the very little money which the public can afford for entertainment, he is preventing that same amount from benefiting professional organisations upon which many thousands of men and women are depending for their livelihood.

Of course this is not the whole case. The amateur has some right to entertain himself by indulging in amateur acting. All the public money spent upon his performances would not necessarily return to the professional theatre if he discontinued his activities. Moreover the amateur has some cause for saying that he enlarges the potential "living theatre" audience, that he sometimes discovers fresh acting and literary talent which afterwards profits the professional theatre. And in any case, as society is ordered, one cannot escape from hurting somebody whatever one does. But I feel that if one takes careful stock of the situation one has to admit that the amateur is still under an obligation to the unemployed of the professional theatre. What can he do about it?

The answer has already been given many times over whenever, in fact, amateurs have been admonished to renounce West End successes and to choose new plays of merit, or to attempt new approaches to classical drama. It is a paradox that new plays are the life-blood of the professional theatre but their reception is so uncertain that everything beyond the obviously popular involve a financial risk which the professional theatre cannot afford. Here, certainly, is where the amateur can justify his existence. He has the time, the resources and the absence of financial risk to allow him to seek out new plays and new authors; to subject them to some authoritative criticism if he himself is doubtful of their dramatic merit; and then to "try them out." No unemployed actor will grudge him a performance under such conditions as these, for a play that was proved to be successful could quite naturally graduate to a professional

theatre, where it would probably enjoy the attention of as many playgoers as any author might desire.

It would be a good thing for all branches of dramatic enterprise if the Society of Authors and the play publishers, as well as authors themselves were to place the West End successes out of reach of amateurs, thus forcing the latter to concentrate upon the discovery of new plays. But amateur experiment should not go so far as to concern itself with new dramatic forms, or with new technique. These demand more experience and proficiency than the amateur can possess. It is of no assistance to art that an amateur society should make a poor attempt at some new play which is beyond amateur skill. Equally it is no service to art that amateurs should perpetuate the conventional method of producing Shakespeare—a method which is more damaging to the poet's popularity than a hundred years of boycott! Classical drama could well be forgotten by the amateur unless he makes some new approach to his subject and thus contributes new ideas which can eventually help the professional stage.

2. *The attitude of the professional stage.*

Already, I expect, some readers of these suggestions have quarrelled with me on the grounds that the professional theatre is unwilling to watch amateur progress or to use the amateur theatre as a trying out ground, for the reason that amateur skill is persistently depreciated by professional actors. My answer is that the attitude of the professional actor rests with the amateur. Let the amateur show by his performances that he is a factor to be reckoned with and the situation will become much easier. But while the amateur standard of performance is as low as some of us who see a good deal of it know it to be, then the professional theatre will naturally view it only with patronising toleration.

Can we look for any improvement in this situation? I think we can if we propose to conduct ourselves in future as though we were in the entertainment business and set to work to give "value for money." That may be a sentiment which is nauseous to some amateurs, but I suggest it is the only way in which the amateur can interest both the general public and also the professional theatre. If in addition we perform plays which are new, we

shall have justified our existence.

"Value for money" in the entertainment business does not necessarily mean an expenditure of vast sums, nor, though this is important, a high standard of technical efficiency. It does imply a high standard of acting and I am still of the opinion that this can be discovered within the amateur movement if we will centre our interest upon acting rather than upon lighting, scenery, group movement and other aspects of performance which are lifeless and unentertaining until they are used in the service of good playwriting and good acting.

Good acting, however, we shall never have while amateurs overlook the ABC of their art. I refer particularly to the almost complete lack of study of form. I have yet to find the amateur actor who appreciates that if acting is an art and not the chancy affair we make it to-day, then actors must systematise their study of it in much the same way that pianists, violinists, artists, sculptors and poets go about the learning of their particular art forms.

These other artists do not forfeit inspiration when they learn the fundamental rules of their art. Nor will the amateur forfeit either inspiration or talent by adopting these suggestions. On the contrary, all those except the dwindling minority to whom acting is still nothing but an opportunity to indulge personal vanity, will find that to give acting and the profession of acting a more intelligent study is to open out fresh opportunities for enjoyment and many more chances of personal success.

Such are what I would like to believe are the finger posts for the future of amateur acting. They are valueless by themselves. They require, to give them life the same type of enthusiasm which one sees in amateur associations associated to the British Drama League. The zeal which we know exists, and systematic study such as is accessible to all of us, will together give direction and strength to the present swift but haphazard growth of amateur acting.

A French version of Mr. Whitworth's play "Haunted Houses" has been made and will be produced for the first time at the Patria Theatre, Brussels, on Thursday, January 23rd, under the direction of M. Edouard Hebdén.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

TOO MUCH "FOREIGN DRAMA"

DEAR SIR,

I am afraid your two correspondents have misunderstood my letter. I have no complaint against interchange of foreign plays etc. with ours, but what I do object to, is the excessive praise given to the foreigner over the British, which is so predominant in the Magazine. There is a danger of having too much of the foreigner's wonderful talents pushed down our throats. We shall become denationalised. On the wireless we have to listen to foreign songs, music, etc., but seldom are we given some of the beautiful English songs, and music. I need hardly mention the awful crooners, and dance bands which moan, and shout the most hideous noises reminiscent of the madhouse.

Yours truly,

A. M. JONES.

31, Newington Green,
London.

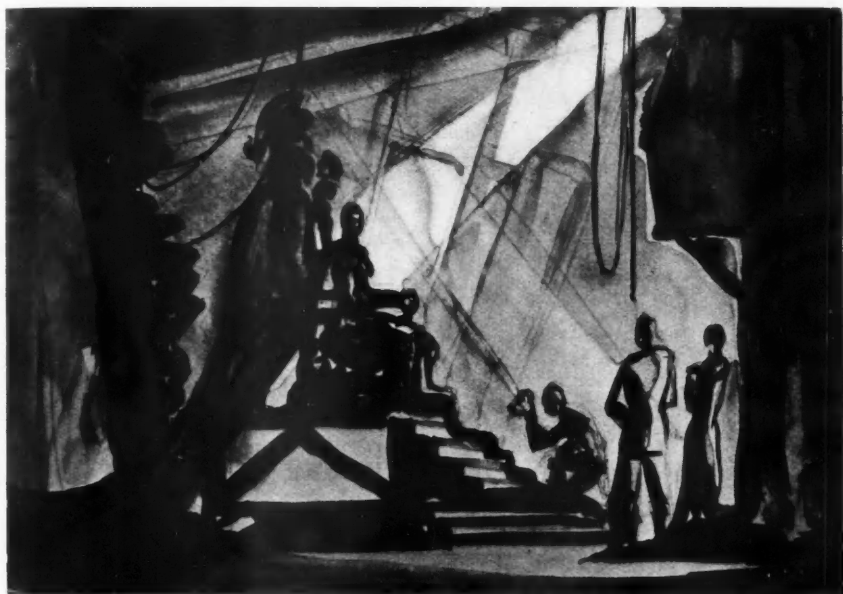
This correspondence must now cease.—EDITOR, "Drama"

BOARD OF EDUCATION CO-OPERATIVE THEATRE

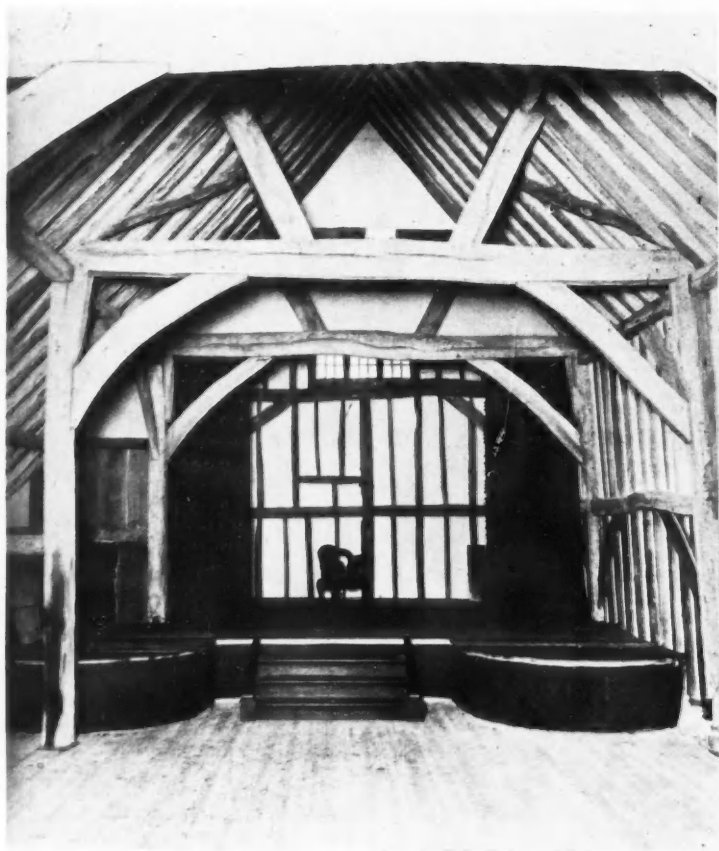
On December 10th and 11th William Congreve's comedy "Love for Love" was performed at King George's Hall by the Board of Education Co-Operative Theatre. The play is a difficult one even for a professional company, but the Board of Education Society made a very good show. Tattle, "a half-witted Beau," as the programme told us, "vain of his amours, yet valuing himself for secrecy," was amusingly played by Mr. B. R. Bligh. Other outstanding performances were those of Miss Dorothy Stevens as Angelica, Mr. H. F. Rowe as Sir Sampson Legend, and of Miss Mary Fox as Miss Prue. All the Stage staff, craftsmanship and music was creditably undertaken by members of the Society, the excellent costumes being supplied by Miss Doreen Erroll.

A NEW PRIZE PLAY

Mrs. Fletcher-Lee has just informed us that she has won the first prize in "The Glasgow Record's" competition for an original play suitable for the Festival. The title of the play is "At the Cross Roads." The prize is £50 and immediate publication. We anticipate that a large number of Societies will wish to act this play which will be obtainable from our Bookshop. Mrs. Fletcher-Lee has also written three full-length plays, one of which entitled "Robert Burns" was performed by the Edinburgh Repertory Theatre two years ago.



SCENE FROM ACT II OF THE MAKROPOULOS
SECRET BY KAREL CAPEK. FROM A DESIGN
BY D. J. FINLEY OF THE INDEPENDENT
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THE TOTALITARIAN THEATRE

By Lilian T. Mowrer

WHEN the National Socialists came into power in Germany in January 1933 they inherited a unique cultural instrument in the theatre. A former age of Court-subsidized playhouses had encouraged and supported all that was best in German and foreign dramatic art. Fourteen years of Republican rule continued the tradition with State and Municipal subsidies replacing Court patronage. The creation of the People's Theatre an Association with half a million subscribers was a bold experiment in popular art. Recruited chiefly among workers, the members owned one of the finest theatres in Berlin, (the *Volksbuehne*) and leased others in the provinces. Once a week, theatres like the State *Schauspielhaus* and Grand Opera were reserved for them, and for the trifling sum of one to two marks fifty they enjoyed the finest productions in the country. Their two touring companies, equipped with motor transport for performers and complete stage effects, brought an admirable repertory of modern and classical plays to small towns and villages.

The Nazis recognised the possibilities of the theatre as a megaphone for their ideas, and immediately set about to destroy everything in it connected with the former régime. Not only Jews, but Social Democrats, intellectuals, radicals, pacifists, "Kultur" bolsheviks, and of course all personal enemies were thrown out. For one reason or another all the dramatists from Hauptmann to Hasenclever were banned, and the stage flooded with political tracts by hitherto-unknown young men. The childishly conceived "Michel" by Dr. Goebbels Minister of Propaganda, a play which had been formerly refused by most managers in Germany was put on at twenty-six different theatres.

By the end of 1933, in spite of favoured box-office treatment to the Brown Shirts, the theatres were half empty. Goebbels was quick to realize the criticism of Nazi culture this implied and the disastrous conclusions people would draw. He immediately set about, not to repair the damage but to cover the traces. By the passing of the Reich Theatre Act, May 1934, he dissolved the three existing actors and managers Unions, confiscated their funds and forced everyone connected with the theatre, into a new organisation. Syndical Chambers for the professions

of acting, playwriting, stage design and direction, music, etc., were founded whose leaders were legally bound to carry out their task "in the spirit of national responsibility." This meant that a record of Nazi activity was more important than artistic ability. The entire personnel of each Chamber is governed by the *Fuehrer Prinzip* or blind obedience to the "leader" This official might be a Storm-Trooper, or a former door-keeper, or one of the "old gang" whom the Nazis wanted to reward, or even a man competent at his job. The theatres did not fill up however, and the State, besides increasing national subsidies, had to make up deficits in private undertakings.

"The theatre is no welfare institution," warned Minister Goering, at the re-opening of his very sumptuously enlarged and redecorated State *Schauspielhaus*. "It is no place for niggling critics, and we will tolerate no dishwasher internationalism," which means foreign plays as well as liberal ideas.

"As long as there exists in Germany any unpolitical neutral or individualistic art our task is not ended," announced the *Volksischer Beobachter*, Hitler's own sheet. So much for their aims. As a result not a single playwright of genius has emerged to embody their ideas, although Goebbels offers prizes for plays and Goering simply commissions them. The first political tracts died a natural death. Richard Billinger, an Austrian of peasant origin and the Nazi's first hope, continues to turn out pleasing "genre" pictures of rural life; there have been some rather gloomy back-to-the-soil dramas like "*Mensch, Aus Erde Gemacht*," by Fredrich Griese. But so much subjugation is exercised that normal creative work has practically ceased. The necessity of avoiding "dangerous" subjects has however resulted in an outcrop of historical dramas, such as Gilbucht's "Charlotte Corday"; Hans Rehberg's "Fredrich Wilhelm I" and Eugen Linz's "Tragedy of Passions," based on the murder of Becket.

One contribution that the Nazis have made to the theatre are the *Thingspiele*, political mystery plays for the open-air theatres (*Thingplatzge*), sixty of which are planned and twelve actually built. Summer festivals take place in an atmosphere of patriotic exaltation, with marching and singing and flag

THE TOTALITARIAN THEATRE

waving. The earliest of these mysteries, Richard Euringer's "German Passion 1933" is a symbolic representation of Hitler as the Messiah. Kurt Heynicke's "Way into the Kingdom" offers an emotional approach to National Socialism: and the "Eternal German Destiny" deals with the "mythos" of the Nordic race. There are dozens of such dramas. Great technical ability is shown in their production (the Nazis have never lacked showmen), but as literature they are inconsiderable. Not one shows the vitality of "*Krach Um Iolanthe*" a farmyard farce about a sow, which was written by a carpenter, August Hinrichs, and ran for two consecutive years at the Lessing Theatre, and in every town in the provinces.

When I visited Berlin last month I found all the theatres full, and hardly a Brown Shirt visible. The State is spending immense sums on rebuilding and decorating; it has acquired a second *Schauspielhaus*, and a popular Opera house. To judge by appearances (an unwise procedure in Germany), stage business is booming. I wondered why, for the programmes offered no explanation. At the *Grosses Schauspielhaus* and at the *Volkesbuehne* were two faded operettes from the early nineties. There were four plays by Shakespeare including a very colorful and freely translated version of "Two Gentlemen of Verona." At another theatre a repertory of Ibsen, Grillparzer, Goethe and Calderon was being played. I went to the premiere of "Thomas Paine," by Hanns Johst, marvelling that this champion of the Rights of Man should figure on the Nazi stage. But the humanitarian Paine fades before the patriot who dared the Americans to fling off England's yoke. Paine is the "drummer" of the United States, just as Hitler (see *Mein Kampf*), is the drummer of the Third Reich. Brilliant production by Jurgen Fehling could not disguise the crude philosophy of the play.

The State Theatres have assembled the remnants of good actors and directors, and a tradition of sound ensemble work still gives good stage results. But even in the classics slapstick buffoonery is greeted with guffaws by the drab audience. I saw two "proletarian" comedies of great coarseness and banality and a charming presentation of a competently written little drawing-room piece whose dialogue suggests an English or American collaborator.

In all Berlin only four theatres remain in

private hands. The rest are on the dole. For although they are full they do not pay. Goebbels has organised the public as ruthlessly as he has organised the critics and actors, but it is an expensive business. He has founded three *Gemeinschaften*, or Leagues, modern equivalent of the Caudine Fork. Membership in the Nazi Culture League is open to all non-masonic Aryans who pay one mark annually (unemployed twenty *pfennige*), and pledge themselves to take ten theatre tickets during the season. In return they get seats at half the box-office price. They cannot choose their play, theatre, or date of their visit, but at least joining the League is a voluntary affair. The Workers League and the famous *Kraft Durch Freude* circulate theatre tickets throughout all shops, factories and offices, at prices varying from seventy-five *pfennige* to one mark fifty. If these are not taken voluntarily they are simply charged up to the recalcitrants and the sum deducted from the week's wages. Theatre-going is practically obligatory in the Third Reich.

For the theatre is a vast social device for absorbing just so many workers, who would otherwise be unemployed, and just so many spectators who might spend their spare time less profitably. From this point of view it functions perfectly.

VILLAGE PLAYWRITING COMPETITION.

Readers of "Drama" are reminded that the organisers of the annual Playwriting Competition held under the auspices of the Village Drama Section of the League are now open to consider one-act plays. The latest date for sending in MSS. is February 1st, 1936, and full information of the conditions of the competition may be obtained on application to the Village Drama Secretary at 9, Fitzroy Square.

Affiliated Societies are reminded that the League is able to arrange for an expert critic to attend their performances and supply a detailed written criticism for the fee of one guinea (plus expenses if the performance takes place outside London). This fee is paid to the critic without any deduction by the League. The impartial opinion of an experienced critic is an undoubted benefit, and several Societies have recently expressed their appreciation of this service.

REFLECTIONS OF A LIBRARIAN

By Dorothy Coates

WHY is it that people have no morals where books are concerned? Even the Best People—in which category, bibliophilically speaking, I would certainly place myself—have lapses in this connection. Meditating on this subject, my eye wanders round my room, and fixes itself, rather disconcertingly, on three books belonging to friends, which would greatly upset the symmetry of my shelves if removed; and on one, a quite small, inexpensive and unimportant volume borrowed from a Book Club in Oxford about three years ago. How this is to be returned, as from one librarian to another, with any semblance of dignity I scarcely know. Perhaps it is salutary to keep it a little longer, a sort of skeleton at the feast, as a reminder that I, although a librarian, am also a borrower.

Books fall into two categories. There is the book which one requisitions from a library, and awaits with eagerness, but which is found on inspection to be quite useless for the particular purpose on hand. It is obviously absurd to waste time returning such a volume. One tosses it aside and forgets it. There is, on the other hand, the book which is essential to one's work; a new work on stage lighting for example. Clearly, no reasonable library would expect one to return a book which was so indispensable. And when one has had a book for, say eighteen months, there is always the feeling that one may not be needing it much longer, and that it would be ridiculous to buy a new copy now. And, in any case, one is used to the library copy. It opens in the most engaging and friendly way at precisely the chapter one is so constantly needing. How well one knows the feeling. And those postcards which librarians send us from time to time asking for the immediate return of certain books which are much in demand; how tiresome they are. How lacking in understanding and imagination. So into the waste-paper basket with them. And in another part of the country some other borrower is saying pathetically or cholericly, according to temperament, "I wonder why I always have to wait for the books I want?"

I am not one of those who condemn the chained library. There is in Oxford a library which from a certain standpoint is ideal. The

dust of centuries lies on its top shelves, vellum and calf and old oak make a quiet colour scheme, and almost every book is chained. But knowledge must be spread abroad, and so the idea of a circulating library has been born. I say "the idea" advisedly, because the library which really circulates is not yet with us. We have libraries which circulate a little distance and which then apparently become chained!

All libraries have, of course, to face from the outset the fact that they will almost certainly, sooner or later, have to contend with borrowers. This is unfortunate, but, I fear, unavoidable. The British Drama League is unique in that it has to contend, not only with the ordinary borrower, but with the Actor-Borrower. The actor is, as one knows, a being of moods which have to be indulged lest his art suffer; careless of conventions, he has grown through centuries of vagabondage to take a certain pride in it. A creature of impulse, it is not to be expected that he should know until mid-day on Saturday what play he wishes to put into rehearsal on the following Monday. But the British Drama League Library has an unlimited supply of books waiting for just such an emergency, and so "ring up the B.D.L. and ask them to send off a set of books by the next train." It sometimes happens, though the Library may have anything up to one hundred copies of the particular play required, that they are all out on that Saturday but would be available in a few days time. This, however, is no use to the Actor-Borrower who is reduced to the verge of suicide. So desperate, indeed, do his straits appear that the librarian has pity and messengers are sent scurrying round London, first to the publishers to buy a dozen new copies and then to the station to hurry them off by train. It is interesting to examine these new and spotless copies on their return in about a fortnight's time. The dust of the stage has coloured the paper a uniform grey, pages are loose or missing, and in most companies one finds (a) the actor who takes his copy of the play home and neatly underlines every word of his part with red ink, and (b) the actor who makes indecipherable, but no doubt invaluable, memoranda in the margin

REFLECTIONS OF A LIBRARIAN

with a handy stick of grease-paint. These same books in the course of their brief life have to go to earnest students of the drama in universities, or to reading circles in remote country drawing-rooms. How delightfully these books, so young in age and yet so old in experience, bring to all who open them the real atmosphere of the theatre. One hears, sometimes, complaints from readers who prefer their books clean, but the Actor-Borrower rightly scorns such squeamishness. He would, to do him justice, hold no brief for the pure-minded borrower who, outraged at the impropriety of a certain speech in "Every Man in his Humour," took scissors and neatly cut the offending passage out of every copy of a set of twelve.

Then there is the borrower who, presumably believes that, like Puck, one can put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes. He will sit down on Sunday evening and write firmly demanding that books should reach him in time for a special reading he has arranged on the following afternoon. This is practically an impossibility, though it will not prevent the borrower writing furiously on Monday night asking why his books had not arrived and enquiring sardonically of what use was the library! To which there seems no adequate reply.

There is a popular belief which one would do much to dispel, that librarians withhold books from borrowers for reasons which are never specified and which are difficult to imagine. This hoarding instinct is, of course, a very marked characteristic of the bookseller who specialises in old and rare books. He may display for sale, even advertise, a Wynkyn de Worde in good condition or a perfect copy of the Kilmarnock Burns, but when a purchaser arrives with a firm offer he will think of a thousand reasons why the treasure should not leave his possession. His daughters may go dowryless, and his sons be forced to emigrate, but he will not part with his "unique copy in mint state." But the librarian of a lending library is not so churlish. Fond of books though he may be, he knows very well that unless they are kept moving they will, before long, submerge him. The borrower then becomes his only hope; and as soon as books are returned to the library the librarian hurries them out again by the next post. If he refrains from doing this, even for a few days, they accumulate on the floor so that he falls

over them, they heap themselves on tables, and obstruct the very light and air from the windows, and as he goes about his affairs they drop upon his head in unexpected avalanches from the top shelves. This is why when a librarian sees a blank wall a look of ecstasy comes over his face. He is calculating how many shelves it would take.

So, as we have seen, there is the tenacious borrower, whose motto appears to be "What I have, I hold"; there is the impetuous borrower, whose books must be with him by return of post; and hardest to bear of all, perhaps, is the borrower who can scarcely be dignified by such a name. After paying a subscription he lapses into complete silence until the end of the year, when he complains that the library has not helped him at all. What should one do to satisfy this type of borrower? Should librarians adopt the new business methods of certain large stores and write periodically to their silent members on some such terms as these.—"Dear Sir, We see, on reference to our files, that you have not availed yourself of our services for many months. We are distressed to think that you have given up the use of books, whether for study or pleasure, and much deplore the mental inertia which has brought about such a state of affairs. May we not send you some samples of our latest plays?" I scarcely think such a method would be acceptable. The truth is that a library can only serve borrowers who use it. If a librarian is asked a question he will go to endless trouble to answer it correctly; if his advice is sought as to the best book for a certain purpose he can generally, from years of experience, be of assistance; and if borrowers return books punctually he can despatch them to others.

I will now go to my book-shelves and will take from them the three books borrowed from long-suffering friends, and also the library book which has been with me for so long, and before another day dawns they shall be packed up and returned. That is to say, if I can find any paper and string. This is unlikely to be the case, and is the borrower's last excuse.

Mr. T. R. Dawes has arranged for students from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art to give a series of performances of English plays in Paris from January 9th to 16th.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF
THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
INCORPORATING
THE VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY

President:
LORD HOWARD DE WALDEN

Chairman of the Council:
VISCOUNT ESHER

Director: GEOFFREY WHITWORTH.

Hon. Treasurer: ALEC REA.

MSS. for publication in DRAMA will be considered if accompanied by stamps for return if unsuitable. All enquiries should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary at the Office of the League, 9, Fitzroy Square, London, W.1.

Telephone: MUSEUM 5022.

Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

THE League enters a new year with a revised constitution, and the complete Rules of the League, as amended, are printed in the present number of "Drama." The Council of the League in its new form will, we believe, secure a new vitality in the running of the League, and above all it should maintain a contact between the League's constituents and its governing body which cannot fail to be fruitful. Without the sacrifice of any of those sources of strength which have brought the League to its present position, the Council will be in definite touch with the English counties in a way which has not hitherto been possible, while the counties themselves should benefit by an internal organisation which will be the natural outcome of the new method of Council elections. While on the subject of the new Constitution mention must be made of the assistance which has been given by Professor Searls, the Chairman of the Committee which formulated it. His grasp of a somewhat complicated situation was invaluable throughout the meetings of the Committee and secured the unanimous acceptance of the scheme.

It may not be generally recognised how large and varied are the interests involved in an organisation such as the British Drama League has come to be. Each individual member sees normally but one aspect of the League's work. An organisation perfect from one point of view might easily fail to take account of another, and the problem is further complicated by the strong professional element which has always been a notable feature in the League's outlook and policy. Such complication is, however, to be regarded not as a source of weakness but of strength so long as an underlying harmony can be maintained. This harmony can only spring from a common enthusiasm for the theatre as an art. In so far as the new Council can nourish this enthusiasm its success is assured.

We are glad to announce that the Earl of Bessborough has accepted the Council's invitation to become a Vice-President of the League. In this case we welcome not only the addition of an important figurehead, but of a name that is associated with practical work for the theatre of no common order. Well known and appreciated is Lord Bessborough's foundation of the Dominion of Canada Drama Festival, and on another page we allude to his earlier foundation of the Stansted Players in Hampshire, which from 1926 to 1931 provided an outstanding example of English community drama. We are glad to think that the League will now benefit from Lord Bessborough's interest and support.

The sale of the Playlovers' Diary published by the British Drama League in association with Messrs. Charles Letts, has exceeded anticipation. Repeated orders have had to be given over and above the number for which the League first contracted. We thank various correspondents for their suggestions for the improvement of the diary in future years.

Readers are reminded that the new Club-room at 9, Fitzroy Square is available not only to members of the League but to members of all affiliated Societies whether resident in London or in the Provinces. The "Snack Bar" is also open for lunch or tea, and, as foreseen, has proved "Warm in Winter."

RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by F. Sladen-Smith

"Old Theatre Days and Ways." By W. J. Lawrence. Harrap, 15s.

"The Fool." By Enid Welsford. Faber & Faber, 21s.

"English Drama." By Camillo Pellizzi. Macmillan, 7s. 6d.

"Literature Recitals." By Alys Mamour. Macmillan, (no price given).

"The Liverpool Repertory Theatre." By Grace Wyndham Goldie. University Press of Liverpool, 5s.

"English Costume of the Later Middle Ages." Drawn and described by Iris Brooke. Black, 6s.

"Elegant Modes in the Nineteenth Century." By Angus Holden. Allan & Unwin, 7s. 6d.

"All Rights Reserved." By N. C. Hunter. French, 2s. 6d.

"The World's Masters." By Howard Peacey. Sidgwick & Jackson, 3s. 6d.

"Inquest." By Michael Barringer. H. F. W. Deane & Sons, 2s. 6d.

DR. LAWRENCE tells us that fifty years of intensive study have gone to the making of his book "Old Theatre Days and Ways," and his researches have obviously been so exhaustive that one can well believe him. The fascinating by-ways and by-products of theatrical history have been explored and examined with a delighted eye for detail, and, once more, we are left marvelling that drama, and some of the finest drama the world has ever known, managed to exist amidst such a wealth of distractions, hinderances, lack of understanding and decent manners. The author himself suggests that our forbears must have been somewhat devoid of nervous sensibility, or the plays would never have withstood the terrible ordeals to which they were subjected. Even at rehearsals visitors were allowed to interfere, and during the course of the play the constant uproar, diversified by the throwing of stones, rotten apples, or any missiles which came handy, to say nothing of hissing, cat calls, "calling for tunes," and the idiocies of Pops' Corner, must have made both dramatist's and actor's life a misery. Most of the book is, perforce, a record of these strange horrors, but there are other chapters dealing with such things as the persistence of black hair as a sign of villainy, the origin of the Green Room, the development of the "encore," and a host of other matters. The book is so catholic in its outlook that to finish, as it does, with high praise of the fourth wall convention, is somewhat of a shock, as this convention may, one day, seem well nigh as curious as some of the milder ones already described. Good as the illustrations are, it is a pity not to learn more about them.

But if Dr. Lawrence's study is intensive, "The Fool," by Miss Enid Welsford, suggests even more meticulous research. The authoress, herself, says that the most Herculean writer of reader must prove unequal to the labour of following the story of all the clowns of all the periods of history, but she seems to have essayed the task, and one can only admire her courage at tackling so vast a subject, and her skill at manipulating heavy material so that at least it is always interesting. All the ramifications of the Fool's life are here, from the primitive gambollings of wizard, lunatic and parasite, and the development as mascot and advisor of Kings, to the transformation into Clown and Harlequin and

the blossoming forth into celebrities such as Dan Leno or Charlie Chaplin. The book is as serious as it is industrious, and the gaiety of many of its characters enters little into its composition (indeed, the lengthy dissertation on "King Lear" is almost a digression), but it should prove an excellent work of reference. Many of the illustrations loose considerably in value by being placed far from the text they illustrate.

After all this learning one turns (with some apprehension of a further dose) to "English Drama. The Last Great Phase." But this book, delightfully translated by Mr. Rowan Williams, is, the author tells us, "really a novel in which the central character, so to speak, is the English soul." This soul, according to Dr. Pellizzi is not only essentially middle-class but incurably childish, although this by no means sums up all the author's amusing and penetrating conclusions. When Dr. Pellizzi is occupied with the English temperament he is always interesting (his picture of the havoc caused by the war to our vital characteristics and institutions is disquieting), but when he is describing the course of our drama he is repeating history already fairly well known, although his account is extraordinarily complete—in all but one matter. As far as the amateur development is concerned, the book might have been written in 1914, and a new chapter of this entertaining history is urgently needed. Mr. Alys Mamour's "Literature Recitals" are based on a scheme in which students or actors with an "Introducer," rather in the B.B.C. manner, hold improving conversations on various aspects of literature from the Greeks to the present day, and then either read or act in the form of tiny plays well chosen examples interspersed with gramophone records. An example is—"1st Speaker; Modern writers have a feeling of one-ness with Nature. 2nd Speaker; They believe in a deep and underlying kinship between man and the world in which he lives. 3rd Speaker; Mr. Gerald Gould expresses this belief in his poem 'The Earth Child.'" Then, after the music from "Fingal's Cave" has been played, a 4th Speaker recites the poem. (Mr. Gould is lucky in his prelude; Jane Austen is introduced by Tchaikovsky's "Casse-Noisette" March!) Many things should be cultivated to make these recitals a success—a sense of diction, rhythm and dramatic form, for instance—the one thing which had better not be cultivated during them is a sense of humour.

"The Liverpool Repertory Theatre," by Mrs. Grace Wyndham Goldie, is a brilliant and discerning history of one of the most inspiring adventures of these years of theatrical depression. It is impossible not to read her account of the struggles and crises of the Liverpool Playhouse from 1911 to 1934 without admiring the authoress' sympathetic outlook on all the difficulties and personalities concerned, and her entertaining way of presenting them. Also, it is impossible not to realise afresh what the world of the theatre (both professional and amateur) owes to William Armstrong, the Director since 1923. The fact that, as Mrs. Goldie points out, the modern Repertory Theatre is no longer a theatre of rebellion, but in many cases is the last outpost of the Legitimate stage, and that from being, at least in intention, a theatre of the left, the Playhouse has become a theatre of the centre, has been in Armstrong's favour,

RECENT BOOKS

for he is not primarily an experimentalist; nevertheless, by his outstanding personality and his flair for the art, the people, and the business of the theatre, he has solved problems which in other hands and in other towns have caused constant failure. Many well-known names appear in the book, together with interesting detail, but no history of the Playhouse could fail to be, in the main a tribute to its remarkable Director.

This month's list includes two books on costume, both good examples of their kind. Miss Iris Brooke's "English Costume of the Later Middle Ages" is especially valuable among costume books because, at last, the illustrations are more copious and important than the text. One good drawing of a historical costume is worth a hundred learned disquisitions. Miss Brooke's drawings are charming—possibly, too charming—but combined with intelligent descriptions they make up a book of definite value. "Elegant Modes in the Nineteenth Century" is a spirited essay by Mr. Angus Holden, illustrated by some amazing fashion plates of the period. We cannot always share Mr. Holden's admiration of the costumes displayed, but we can rejoice in his amusing descriptions of them, enriched as they are with surprising details from the life of the time. Most of us will read with interest the account of the miserable lives of the six daughters of George III, or the derivation of the word "grog," and many other matters, while the extraordinary developments of a hundred years of dress seem to prove the author's contention that the exaggeration of a fashion is a test of its vitality.

We are sometimes told that there are only five jokes in the world; apparently, marital infidelity is one of them. But, to judge from certain plays written for the West End, it might seem to be the only joke. In "All Rights Reserved," a comedy by Mr. N. C. Hunter, a wife agrees to go on a holiday in order to permit her husband to continue his adventures with one of her friends. The comedy consists in the continual frustration of these adventures, and the supreme moment is reached a few seconds before the fall of the curtain, when it is discovered that although the husband has had a sorry time, the wife, on her own, has been far more successful. Of the other two long plays in the list, "The World's Masters" by Mr. Howard Peacey is an elaborate drama of the expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain in 1609, and the endeavour of a young girl, betrothed to a Duke, to save them. Her efforts bring her to the notice of the Inquisition and the Military Tribunal; also, besides losing the Duke, her Morisco lover is killed and she eventually dies. It is an interesting and sometimes colourful play, but inclined to be long-drawn out. In the last play, "Inquest" by Mr. Michael Barringer, the scene, after a short prologue, is set in an improvised Coroner's Court, and with considerable dexterity, especially in the management of telling details, we are given a drama which (although all things are by no means clear) usually manages to be lively and sometimes startling, and at the end there is a satisfactory revelation. There is little or no real characterization, but the eminent K.C.'s bouts with the fussy and obstinate Coroner are amusing.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

"THE RIVALS" AT NEW BARNET.

An independent company of amateur actors under Ivy and Donald Finlayson, presented this classical comedy at New Barnet in a manner that calls for praise of detail and of management rather than of design or originality. The production, under Mr. Donald Finlayson who also played Faulkland, was notably competent and ingenious, especially in view of the stage difficulties; but it could not decide whether it was traditional or novel and hovered between the two with somewhat disconcerting effect. Mr. Pendleton as Bob Acres, with Miss Stringer as Lucy were perhaps the star performers; they both acted with confidence, colour, humour and a sense of continuity. Mr. Finlayson played Faulkland in a modern manner which did not fit in with some of the other acting but which was, in itself, an interesting and novel piece of work. Miss Jobbins could have been much broader in her treatment of Mrs. Malaprop but she excelled, in a cast that was notably excellent in this respect, in her diction and clear phrasing; the cast should have given her more support in natural reactions to her curious habits of speech. The smaller parts were played with refreshing vigour but lacked variety, especially variety of inflexion. The settings were designed by Mr. Scott Calder and were very effective, especially his design for the Kings Mead Fields scene; like the production generally, however, they swung from one style to another and destroyed the sense of continuity.

G. E. MIDDLEDITCH.

LYONS AMATEUR SOCIETY (GREENFORD).

The Greenford Section of the Lyons Club Amateur Dramatic Society recently presented five one-act plays in their own theatre—"The Helping Hands," by Gertrude Jennings; "Night Journey" by Leonard J. Hines; "Dark Lighthouse," by Philip Slade, a member of the society; "In the Tunnel" by Roy Jordan; and "No One Knows Everything" by F. Morton Howard. Scenery was designed and made by the society; lighting was also in the hands of the society's electrician. The stage management department under Mr. B. J. Bond especially distinguished itself, and the society is to be congratulated upon the possession of a fully equipped stage. The five producers were all members of the society and chief honours go to Miss Emmie Pusey for her vigorous, dramatic production of "Night Journey." Mr. Slade's production of his own play was very able but lacked balance. Mr. Charles Langley's Lorry Driver in "Night Journey" was the outstanding performance of the evening and showed a real sense of the theatre, but Mr. Ralph White, Miss Vera Lewry and Miss Pusey ran him very close. One or two novices showed more than ordinary promise and the general standard of producing and acting indicated that the society should be able to put on a very good full length performance at any time. By way of general criticism—space forbids more—the producers had not too sure a notion of their objectives and the acting lacked strength. The society would do well to concentrate for a time upon plays which give a clear lead to the actors. As it was, one felt that the evening's performances would have been much better had plays of greater dramatic merit been attempted.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

UNIVERSITY DRAMATICS.

Your readers might perhaps be interested in a short account of the difficulties of a dramatic society at a Northern University where students have so little leisure. Our chief trouble is to choose a play for our annual production. We feel that we need a play that will give us some artistic satisfaction; but will also be a financial success. Two years ago in Sheffield we gave "The Cherry Orchard"; last year Lionel Hale's "She Passed Through Lorraine." Everyone who acted in both agreed that there was more pleasure in our attempts at the "Cherry Orchard" because of the play's greater artistry. "Lorraine" was financially a success but spiritually not profound. There is always this conflict; this year we are hoping Shaw's "Caesar and Cleopatra" will effect a reconciliation. The conflict is particularly acute for a University Dramatic Society that feels the need for greatness in a play; our constant cry is "Where are the great new plays?"

Play-readings present us another problem. Reading plays is quite as much an art as acting them; and needs a quite different technique. It would be a great help if someone would write a booklet on this separate art, because readings particularly of tragedies can often build atmosphere almost to breaking-point. No ludicrous distractions are possible. But all the readers must feel the words bitten into their minds: on Armistice Day in Sheffield we read Drinkwater's "X-O," and all four readers achieved this. The result was memorable. A narrator read the stage directions in their bald prose. Slight pauses marked the end of a scene; the whole effect was attained with simplicity and sincerity. And with the right type of play such a reading is very moving.

P. V. YOULE,
Hon. Secretary,

Sheffield University, Union Dramatic Society.

"THE LATE CHRISTOPHER BEAN."

By the Board of Trade Dramatic Society at the Cripplegate Theatre, London. This production, good in so many respects, was an example of what one so often sees—or does not see!—in amateur acting—lack of understanding of the fundamental style of the play. The Board of Trade took this play in its broad and literal sense, and except for Miss Myra Richards playing Gwenny, without subtlety; yet of all comedies which we have recently seen in the West End, surely this insists upon subtle treatment. Had the Society founded their production on a more careful study of the dramatic feeling of this play, their many excellent qualities would have been far more noticeable. For Miss Richards' acting was genuinely moving but she could have improved her very fine performance by imbuing it with more variety of facial expression and a greater range of emotion. Mr. Francis Drummond-Hay marred a clever and very likeable study of the famous Doctor Haggerty by underplaying his part. More force to his acting would have brought out a number of points which unfortunately went for very little. Still it was very good to see this Society breaking away from trivial, unpolished farce; their performance of "Christopher Bean" demonstrates that they are perfectly capable of tackling worth-while drama with success.

G. E. MIDDLEDITCH.

PANTOMIME AT CLIFTON.

"ROBINSON CRUSOE."

This year's pantomime by the Astra Maris Players, produced at the Clifton Concert Hall was the brightest and happiest show ever done by this company. It was called "Robinson Crusoe," but the title matters little in the general hurly-burly of merry music, dancing, singing, and comedy. Nevertheless, the essence of pantomime—a light fantastic story side-tracked here and there with delightful pieces of nonsense—is not swamped by the spectacular incidental effects, as it might well be.

To Mr. Leonard Saunders and Mr. Edward Snow may be traced most of the extra tit-bits. They have enriched these productions with their topical touches every year, but this time Mr. Leonard Wall lent a hand as well. The joke about Margate Town Council never spending any money and the ratepayers never paying any rates because the Magistrates have lost all the summonses, betrays them at once.

Of the general effects, the chorus singing and dancing ensembles were most noticeable, particularly the male harmony work and the ballets. Mr. Percival Harvey, as chorus master, had done his job well, and Miss Marjorie Chater had provided a ballet that would do her credit anywhere. One has in mind the "Coral Princess" ballet on the tropical island, executed with abundant grace and devised with much imagination and artistry. It is impossible to mention every scene in detail, or to comment on every individual performance.

In fact it is unnecessary, for the whole show was characterised by a singularly high level of consistency.

Mrs. Marjorie Burnier was the obvious and automatic choice as principal boy. She was a dashing Robinson Crusoe, completely confident and self-possessed.

GUILDFORD REPERTORY COMPANY.

Attending for the first time a performance of the Guildford Repertory Company I was greatly surprised at many excellent features of this Company's work.

First the enterprise in building in a Church Hall a stage with a 32 foot opening and a depth of 22 feet, complete with admirable lighting in such a way that the greater part can be dismantled in a very short time.

The performance of "Flowers of the Forest" by van Druen was excellently mounted and exceptionally well acted, Jean Dodds, Spencer Bates and Ernest Ede giving really distinguished performances as Naomi Jacklin, Richard Newton—Clare and Leonard Dobie respectively.

Clearly much was owed to the producer Frances Paton Hood who obtained from the Company, with the exception of certain smaller parts, a level seldom obtained away from the professional stage.

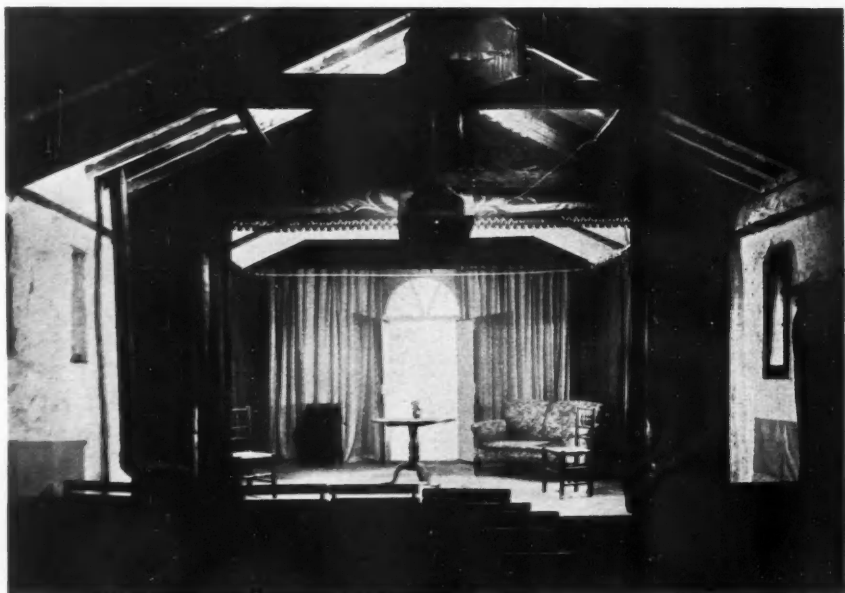
A most pleasurable feature was the back-stage organisation. To volunteer electricians, stage hands, "prop" assistants, must a great deal of credit go for the unusually high standard attained.

The Guildford Repertory Company is under the direction of Claud Powell, *Hon. R.A.M., Hon. R.C.M.*, who also directs in conjunction a School of Music and a company for Light Opera.

OSMOND P. RAPHAEL.



SCENE FROM "THE TEMPEST" AS PRODUCED
BY F. SLADEN-SMITH FOR THE UNNAMED
SOCIETY, MANCHESTER, DECORATION BY ERIC
NEWTON.



THE DALTON (IN FURNESS) COMMUNITY THEATRE, AS OPENED ON NOVEMBER 23rd, 1935.

A loft converted and equipped by the Dalton Unemployed Workers' Drama Group. The stage is 17 feet wide, and 20 feet deep. Seating accommodation for 100 persons.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

THE GLOUCESTER HIGH SCHOOL DRAMATIC SOCIETY.

On Nov. 27th-30th at Gloucester, the Girls' High School continued their excellent tradition of presenting annually a Shakespeare play. This year's production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" was notable for its high standard, and for the enthusiasm of the players.

The quarrel between the lovers was well maintained in spite of its rather unnecessary length, while Peter Quince's play, with Bottom as a real tower of strength, brought the house down. There was a tendency among several of the characters to speak their lines too fast, a notable exception being Lysander, whose enunciation was perfect—here is a player worth watching. Unity was provided in the simple though highly effective setting of the enchanted wood by a lively band of fairies and elves and the ever-present Puck, a real imp of mischief as probably only a child can be.

As always with a school production much depends on the producer. Miss N. Neve must be congratulated on her expert handling of the large cast and the many deft touches which made the play such a success.

M. S. T.

CAERPHILLY PLAYERS (A.D.S.)

In 1931 December we formed a Dramatic Society for the Town of Caerphilly. All our performances are for charities. We have had very successful shows. We have already performed the following :—

"9-45."

"Baa, Baa, Black Sheep."

"A Pair of Spectacles."

"The Coming of Simon Eval."

We are now preparing for the performance in April of "I'll leave it to you" by Noel Coward. Our producer is Mr. Alban Morris ("Stage" Critic for Cardiff and District). Our last performance was in aid of the Local Playing Fields Association.

Our membership has increased from 10 members to 32 playing members.

We are making our first entry in the British Drama League Festival this year.

(Mrs.) JENNIE BEVAN,
Hon. Secretary.

BOIS FARM THEATRE.

This new Barn Theatre, which was illustrated in the last number of "Drama," opened to the public on December 26th with a Nativity adapted from the Chester plays. Subsequent productions will include "Victoria Regina" by Laurence Housman, "Magic" by G. K. Chesterton, and "The Sulky Fire" by Jean Jacques Bernard. The company are a group of young professional actors and actresses reinforced by well-known London artists. The producer is Ida Teather who has worked at the Volksbühne, Berlin, and in several London theatres. The programme will later include ballet, music, lectures and debates, and the Season is planned to last throughout the year, the programme being changed every fortnight.

Admission is by membership, and full particulars may be obtained from the Secretary, Bois Farm, Chesham Bois, Bucks. (Telephone: Amersham 864).

THE STANSTED PLAYERS.

On the return of Lord and Lady Bessborough from Canada the Stansted Players will resume their activities in the New Year, when they will give four performances of James Bridie's "Tobias and the Angel," on January 9th, 10th and 11th in the Stansted Theatre.

It may be recalled that the Society of Stansted Players was founded in 1926 and regularly gave two productions a year until 1931 when Lord Bessborough went to Canada as Governor General. In his absence "Twelfth Night" was produced in 1932. Otherwise their activities have been suspended. Their previous Shakespearean productions included "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "The Merchant of Venice," "Henry IV," (Part 1), and "The Taming of the Shrew." Other Productions included popular plays such as "Trilby," "Outward Bound," and "The Younger Generation."

Amongst those who have played at Stansted are several prominent members of the well known amateur organisations, the Canterbury "Old Stagers" and the Windsor "Strollers." Lord Duncannon, Lord and Lady Bessborough's eldest son, appeared regularly in all Stansted productions, and while his father was in Canada, played the roles of "Hamlet," "Romeo," and the Angel in "Tobias and the Angel" for leading Amateur Repertory Theatres in Canada. In the forthcoming production of the latter he will play the same part—that created by Henry Ainley a few years ago.

The Stansted Theatre has seating for 200 people. All seats are numbered and reserved. It is advisable, therefore, to book seats in advance by application to Mr. W. Browning, Box Office, Stansted Theatre, Rowland's Castle, Hants. (Tel: Rowlands Castle 13).

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

The Playgoers' Dramatic Club, Newcastle-on-Tyne, a club still in its infancy, has as its aim the object of producing plays for any deserving local charity so desiring. So far in three very successful productions the sum of £135 has been handed over to charitable bodies.

Recently the Club gave an extremely vital performance of "The Mocking Bird" by Lionel Hale, this was produced by Miss Olive Woolf and took place at the Little Theatre, Tesmond.

A special feature of the production was its speed and variety of light and shade, this coupled with the strong and skilful characterisation of each individual part and the delicate handling of the finer points of the play, helped to perfect excellent entertainment.

R.A.F. ESTABLISHMENT A.D.S.

No production of this play could quite cover up the fact that it is a collection of dramatic bits and pieces but I think that Messrs. Ellingworth and Perring who produced it at Farnborough, could have given it more cohesion with a swifter treatment and a smarter technique. They did however, succeed in getting over Priestley's characteristically pleasant comedy in a most delightful and friendly manner thus providing us with an enjoyable entertainment. Chief acting honours go to Mrs. E. Lockspeiser for a refreshingly bold attack upon the part of aunt Lucy; to Mr. E. A. Lawlor for an original and well thought-out performance as George Radfern; to Mr. F. Rowarth playing Inspector Stack in a way that was credible (policemen are so seldom justly treated on the stage!); and to Mr. A. V. Owen as that engaging slacker, Uncle Bernard. Of these and the others in the cast, however, I would make a general criticism that they played too slowly and without enough force.

RULES OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

Incorporating the Village Drama Society.

I. TITLE OF THE LEAGUE

The name of the League to be "The British Drama League."

II. OBJECT OF THE LEAGUE

The object of the League as set out in a Trust Deed executed on the 19th day of December, 1934 is as follows:—"The promotion in Great Britain (and throughout the British Empire) of general education in relation to the Art of the Theatre (hereinafter called "the general purpose of the League") and in particular (subject always to the general purpose of the League) *inter alia* to promote a national festival of community drama, to support village drama, to organise drama schools, to organise dramatic competitions, lectures, conferences and exhibitions of theatrical art, to maintain a magazine, to maintain libraries of books and documents relating to drama, to make available to members, either by sale or hire, costumes, books, plays, pamphlets and documents, gramophone records, and other publications relating to the art of the theatre at as low a price, as may be, having regard to the expenses incurred by the League in relation thereto, and to acquire by purchase or to rent suitable premises for the general purpose of the League including therein the provision of meeting places for members."

III. MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the League shall be open to all persons who are concerned with the general purpose of the League. Membership shall be acquired by the payment of an annual subscription, which payment shall be taken as signifying the subscribers' agreement with the Rules of the League.

IV. SUBSCRIPTIONS

(a) BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

The annual subscription shall be £1 is., which shall entitle a Member to the receipt of the League's Monthly Magazine, to a vote at General Meetings, and to the right to form affiliated Groups.

(b) BY GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Any Organisation of not less than ten persons may become affiliated to the League on payment of an annual subscription of £1 is. As an affiliated Organisation it shall, in the person of its duly nominated representative, acquire and exercise all the privileges afforded by the League. Societies in villages of not more than 4,000 inhabitants may affiliate to the League on the terms of the agreement with the Village Drama Society, which have been deposited in the offices of the League.

The policy and management of an affiliated Organisation shall, subject to these rules, be left entirely in its own hands.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS, whether of individuals or of Organisations shall be payable in advance to the Hon. Treasurer of the League. Subscriptions become due on January 1st or June 30th. Notice of resignation of membership or of affiliation shall be sent to the Secretary in writing one calendar month before the expiration of the subscription, otherwise the membership shall be held to be continued, and the member or Organisation shall be liable to pay the subscription for the following twelve months.

V. HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

Persons who have rendered conspicuous service to the Art of the Theatre may be elected Honorary Members by a vote of the Council.

VI. CANCELLATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Any member or Organisation whose conduct shall be deemed by the Council to be opposed to the interests of the League may be struck off the List of Members, upon which the subscription for the year shall be returned. But any member, or

Organisation shall have the right to appeal against such a decision to the next General Meeting of the League, on the requisition, to be made within a month of the decision, in the case of members, of at least ten fellow-members; or, in the case of an Organisation on the requisition of the Secretaries of at least five other affiliated organisations. Pending the next General Meeting, the membership in question shall be held to be in suspense.

VII. GOVERNMENT OF THE LEAGUE

(a) The government and funds of the League shall be administered by the Council in accordance with the provisions of the Trust Deed, always providing that the League may not make any dividend, gift, division, or bonus in money to or between any of its members. The Council shall consist of not more than 47 members, and shall consist of the 4 Trustees for the time being, not more than 10 annually co-opted members, one of whom shall be a representative of the Empire over-seas, and 33 members elected annually. Of these elected members 15 shall be termed National members, and shall be elected annually by postal ballot throughout the entire membership. 18 shall be termed Regional members, and shall be elected annually on the basis hereinafter to be described.

(b) *Election of 15 National Members.* All nominations for the election of National members on the Council shall be sent in writing signed by two members of the League as proposer and seconder and accompanied by a guarantee from the proposer that the consent of the candidate to serve as a member of the Council if elected has been obtained. Nominations must be sent to the Secretary on or before May 15th in each year.

(c) *Election of 18 Regional Members.* For purposes of this election, and for such other purposes as may be defined from time to time by the Council, in each administrative county area in England with the exception of London, a meeting of two representatives from each affiliated organisation and of each individual member within that county, shall be called each year not later than the 1st day of May, each individual member and each affiliated organisation having one vote. At this meeting a county representative of the League shall be elected from any names duly nominated which have been sent in at least a fortnight before the date of the meeting, postal voting to the meeting being permitted. The 42 members so elected shall be grouped in three English Areas to be formed from time to time by the Council, and shall thus constitute three Area Committees whose duties shall be defined from time to time by the Council. A meeting of each Area Committee thus formed shall be held annually not later than the first day in June and shall have the right to co-opt other members, who shall be either individual members of the League or members of an affiliated organisation, to assist them in promoting the work of the League in that Area. From the Committee thus elected and co-opted it shall be the duty of the elected members to select 4 representatives to serve on the Council of the League, making 12 members in all. 2 representatives from Scotland, 2 from Wales and 2 from London shall likewise be elected to the Council by such methods as from time to time it may determine.

(d) The President and Vice-Presidents shall be elected by the Council and shall hold office for one year, and shall be eligible for re-election.

(e) The Council shall also elect from their own number a Chairman and an Hon. Treasurer, who shall hold office for one year and be eligible for re-election; and appoint a Director and/or Secretary (Honorary or otherwise) who may or may not be one of their own number.

(f) The Council may appoint committees or sub-committees for special objects from their own body, with or without the addition of others, and shall define their duties and powers—the Chairman of the Council, Hon. Treasurer and the Secretary (Honorary or otherwise) to be an ex-officio member of any such committee.

(g) The Council shall be empowered to make by-laws, but such by-laws must be ratified at the next ensuing General Meeting of the League, for incorporation in the Rules of the League, if approved.

(h) The Council shall meet at least three times in each year, and on other occasions when summoned by the Secretary. Six members of the Council shall form a

quorum. The Secretary shall give to each member seven days' notice of meeting and the nature of the business to be discussed, but the accidental omission to give such notice, or the non-receipt of such notice, shall not invalidate the proceedings of the Council.

(i) The Council shall have power to appoint such paid officers as it thinks fit.

VIII. ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Each year the Council shall summon a Conference to consist of two delegates from each affiliated organisation. It shall also be open to individual members. It shall be held in some convenient place which shall be decided upon if possible at the previous Conference. Affiliated organisations and individual members shall be entitled, upon giving one month's notice in writing to the Secretary of the League, to bring before the Conference any questions affecting the League's development and the drama in general for the purpose of moving resolutions upon them.

The Chairman of the Conference, who shall have been appointed beforehand by the Council, may in his discretion admit other matters to the Agenda. Each organisation and individual present may cast one vote. The resolutions of the Conference shall be considered forthwith by the Council, and failing adoption, they shall be referred to the next Annual General Meeting.

IX. GENERAL MEETINGS.

(a) There shall be an Annual General Meeting of the League held in London on a date before the last day of June in each year, to be fixed by the Council, for the purposes of:

- (1) Receiving the Report of the Council.
- (2) Receiving the Statement of Accounts.
- (3) Electing Auditors.
- (4) Considering and, if necessary, taking action with reference to any business or motion of which due notice has been given.

Any member desirous to bring forward any business at such meeting shall give notice thereof to the Council on or before the first day of June.

(b) Not less than fourteen days' notice of every General Meeting, specifying the place, the day, and the hour of the meeting, and in the case of special business the general nature of the business to be transacted thereat, shall be given to each affiliated Society and member at his last known address in the United Kingdom, in such form and manner as the Council may from time to time prescribe, but the accidental omission to give such notice to, or the non-receipt of such notice by, any member shall not invalidate the proceedings of any General Meeting.

(c) The Council of the League shall, by a vote of the majority of their full number, or on receipt of a requisition signed by at least fifteen members, direct the Secretary to convene a Special General Meeting of the members for the consideration of any urgent matter, and the resolutions adopted at such meetings shall have the same force as if adopted at the Annual General Meeting.

(d) Every General Meeting of the League shall be presided over by the President, or in his absence by one of the Vice-Presidents to be elected by the Council, or in their absence the meeting shall elect its own chairman. The chairman presiding at any meeting shall have an original and also a casting vote.

(e) The decision of a majority of the members present at a General Meeting and actually voting shall be decisive. The vote shall be taken by ballot if demanded by a majority of those present. Ten members personally present shall form a quorum. No alteration of these rules shall be made except at a General Meeting, and no rule shall be proposed for adoption at a General Meeting which is inconsistent with the General Purpose of the League.

X. DISSOLUTION OF THE LEAGUE.

The League shall not be dissolved without the assent of a majority of two-thirds of the members present at a General Meeting, and at least sixty days' notice shall be given to the members of any proposal to dissolve the League.

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